AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) In a messaging board server using a legacy protocol to post data messages for multiple clients, a method of extending the functionality and data properties offered by the legacy protocol, without modifying the legacy protocol so as to maintain support for clients with only legacy capabilities, the method comprising the acts of:

receiving legacy data, including a main body of a data message, for posting on a messaging board over an unsecured legacy channel using a legacy protocol for supporting legacy clients;

participating in the creation of a secure side channel for exchanging extended data properties and supporting functionalities not offered by the legacy protocol;

receiving over the secure side channel extended data that includes a client hash value, created by a client when hashing at least a portion of the legacy data, and metadata for defining extended data properties that extend the legacy protocol;

creating a server hash value by hashing at least a portion of the legacy data received over the unsecured legacy channel;

linking the legacy data and the extended data; and

comparing the client hash value with the server hash value to ensure that the legacy data has not been altered for extending the functionality of the legacy protocol by securing the unsecured legacy channel without having modified the legacy protocol.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the metadata within the extended data properties includes a type of message chosen from one of a question, comment, suggestion, answer, an answered question or an answered suggestion.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the metadata within the extended data properties includes profiler data, which has details about a user who posted the legacy data including at least one of the user's integrity or how long the user has been posting messages to the message board server.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the metadata within the extended data properties is periodically updated based on voting input from one or more users.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the voting input from the one or more users is an opinion rating the message as one or more of useful, specifically the answer to an original question, or spam.

6. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the voting input from the one or more users is an opinion rating that is a scaled scoring.

7. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the voting input from the one or more users is a ranking of an author that posted the main body of the data message within the legacy data as an expert, guru, novice, apprentice, or company employee.

8. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the voting input for the one or more users is a scaled score ranking of an author that posted the main body of the data message within the legacy data.

9. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the one or more users are authenticated over the secure side channel.

10. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the authentication of the one or more users are based on one or more of an encryption, digital signing, basic HTTP, Windows NTLM, Kerberos, X509 certificate, Passport or MAC based authentication.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the legacy protocol is network news transport protocol, and wherein the side channel protocol is hypertext transport protocol using secure socket layer protocol to secure the side channel.

12. (Original) The method of claim11, wherein a format for the extended data received over the secure side channel is extensible markup language.

13. (Previously Presented) In a client that posts messages to a messaging board server using a legacy protocol, a method of extending the functionality and data properties offered by the legacy protocol without modifying the legacy protocol so as to maintain support for clients with only legacy capabilities, the method comprising the acts of:

posting legacy data, including a main body of a message, on a messaging board over an unsecured legacy channel using a legacy protocol that supports legacy clients;

establishing a secure side channel when exchanging extended data for supporting data properties and functionality not offered by the legacy protocol;

creating a client hash value by hashing at least a portion of the legacy data; and

sending over the secure side channel extended data that includes metadata for defining extended data properties and the client hash value; and

correlating the legacy data sent on the unsecured legacy channel with the extended data sent over the secure side channel to ensure that the legacy data over the unsecured legacy channel has not been altered.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the metadata within the extended data properties includes a type of message chosen from one of a question, comment, suggestion, answer, an answered question or an answered suggestion.

15. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the metadata within the extended data properties includes profile data, which has details about a user of the client that posted the legacy data including at least one of the user's integrity or how long the user has been posting messages to the message board server.

16. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein at least a portion of the metadata within the extended data properties includes voting input from a user of the client that posted the legacy data.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the voting input from the user is an opinion rating the message as one or more of useful, not useful, useful but need more information, specifically the answer to an original question, or spam.

18. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the voting input from the user is an opinion rating that is a scaled scoring.

19. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the voting input for the one or more users is a scaled score ranking of a user that posted the main body of the data message within the legacy data.

20. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the user is authenticated over the secure side channel.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein the authentication of the user is based on one or more of an encryption, digital signing, basic HTTP, Windows NTLM, Kerberos, X509 certificate, Passport or MAC based authentication.

22. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the legacy protocol is network news transport protocol, and wherein the side channel protocol is hypertext transport protocol using secure socket layer protocol to secure the side channel.

23. (Original) The method of claim 22, wherein a format for the extended data sent over the secure side channel is extensible markup language.

24. (Original) In a client that receives messages from a network server using a legacy protocol, a method of extending the functionality and data properties offered by the legacy protocol without modifying the legacy protocol so as to maintain support for clients with only legacy capabilities, the method comprising the acts of:

receiving legacy data, including at least one main body of a message, from a network server to be received over an unsecured legacy channel using a legacy protocol that supports legacy clients;

establishing a secure side channel when exchanging extended data for supporting data properties and functionality not offered by the legacy protocol;

receiving over the secure side channel extended data that includes metadata for defining extended data properties and a server hash value, which is a hash of at least a portion of the legacy data received over the unsecured legacy channel;

linking the legacy data and the extended data;

creating a client hash value by hashing at least a portion of the legacy data received over the unsecured channel; and

comparing the client hash value with the server hash value to ensure that the legacy data has not been altered.

25. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein the network server is a message board server, and the metadata within the extended data properties includes a type of message chosen from one of a question, comment, suggestion, answer, an answered question or an answered suggestion.

26. (Original) The method of claim 25, wherein the network server is a message board server, and the legacy data received over the unsecured legacy channel includes a conversation thread that has at least one root message that is a question and one or more other messages, and wherein the metadata includes a type of message for the other messages chosen from one of a question, comment, suggestion, answer, an answered question or an answered suggestion.

27. (Original) The method of claim 26, wherein the client visually collapses the conversation thread based on user-specified criteria and the extended data properties received for the root message and the other messages.

28. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein the network server is a message board server and the metadata within the extended data properties includes profiler data, which has details about a user who posted the legacy data including at least one of the user's integrity or how long the user has been posting messages to the message board server.

29. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein the network server is a message board server and the at least a portion of the metadata within the extended data properties is periodically updated based on voting input from one or more users, and wherein the client periodically makes a request for the extended data properties that have changed.

30. (Original) The method of claim 29, wherein the voting input from the one or more users is an opinion rating the message as one or more of useful, not useful, useful but need more information, specifically the answer to an original question, or spam.

31. (Original) The method of claim 29, wherein the opinion rating is a scaled scoring.

32. (Original) The method of claim 29, wherein the voting input from the one or more users is a ranking of an author that posted the main body of the data message within the legacy data as an expert, guru, novice, apprentice, or company employee.

33. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein the network server is a message board server, the legacy protocol is network news transport protocol, and wherein the side channel protocol is hypertext transport protocol using secure socket layer protocol to secure the side channel.

34. (Original) The method of claim 33, wherein a format for the extended data received over the secure side channel is extensible markup language.

35-40 (Cancelled).

41. (New) The method of claim 25, wherein:

the secure side channel provides for dynamic and static metadata to be transferred therein, and receiving over the secure side channel extended data includes receiving both dynamic and static metadata, wherein the static metadata defines a thread type as one or more types selected from a group consisting of: question, comment, suggestion, answer, unanswered question, and answered question, and wherein the dynamic metadata defines voting properties allowing users of the message board server to vote on ratings of one or more types selected from a group consisting of: a message rating, a thread rating, a rating of an author;

the method further comprises:

using the dynamic metadata to provide one or more ranking options to one or more users of the message board server, wherein providing one or more ranking options includes providing different voting mechanisms to different categories of users and such that a normal user is provided with a subset of ranking options and a thread owner is provided with additional voting options; and

receiving ranking information from the one or more users of the message board server in accordance with the voting information specified in the dynamic metadata.